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UNIVERSITY RELATIONS • MISSOULA, MT 59812 • 406-243-2522 • FAX: 406-243-4520

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Contact: Phil Bain, registrar, (406) 243-2412; Dave Forbes, dean, School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences, (406) 243-4621.

UM CONFERS HONORARY DEGREE ON PHILANTHROPIST

MISSOULA --

Entrepreneur and philanthropist L.S. "Sam" Skaggs Jr. will receive The University of Montana's highest honor during Commencement ceremonies Saturday, May 15.

UM President George Dennison will confer an honorary Doctor of Science degree on Skaggs, who is known for his contributions to biomedical research nationwide and pharmacy education in the West. He also has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to providing scholarships for minority students attending western universities.

Skaggs retired in 1995 as chairman of American Stores Co., one of the nation's largest pharmacy chains. Before rising to the top of the family-owned business in 1962, he worked at Skaggs pharmacies in Billings and Great Falls.

"Sam Skaggs has set a wonderful example of support for higher education," Dennison said. "Not only has he contributed funds to assist in the construction of facilities, but he also has helped colleges and universities open new opportunities to students from groups and places typically not well represented in the health professions. It is highly appropriate that we recognize him for his good efforts."

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In 1996 Skaggs and his wife, Aline, made one of the largest gifts ever for medical research -- \$100 million to San Diego's Scripps Research Institute to establish the Skaggs Institute for Chemical Biology.

Pharmacy buildings at the universities of Arizona, Colorado and Utah bear his family name and pay tribute to his support. UM has joined that list, naming the pharmacy and physical therapy addition now under construction in honor of its chief benefactor. The 70,000-square-foot addition, scheduled for completion next fall, will provide much needed space for research labs and classrooms for the programs within UM's School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences. Skaggs' philanthropic organization, the Salt Lake City-based ALSAM Foundation, contributed \$5.7 million to the \$10.4 million project. The philanthropist also helped secure a \$2.5 million gift from American Stores Co.

"Mr. Skaggs has made available the tools to assist faculty in providing UM students with outstanding educational experiences in the entry-level and graduate programs both in pharmacy and physical therapy," said Dave Forbes, dean of the School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences. "Additionally, the new large lecture hall will be used by the entire campus and will add immeasurably to the utility of the entire lecture hall complex."

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